Amendments to the Claims

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of claims:

Claims 1-6 (**Cancelled**)

7. (**Currently amended**) A method for predicting the likelihood that [[an]] a human individual who has been diagnosed with multiple sclerosis will experience rapid progression of multiple sclerosis, comprising:

a) obtaining a ~~nucleic acid~~ sample that includes the 3'-untranslated region of the CD24 gene from [[an]] the individual ~~to be assessed~~; and

b) determining if there [[is a]] are deletions at positions 1580 and 1581 of the ~~native~~ individual's CD24 gene ~~in the individual, which sequence corresponds to SEQ ID NO: 1~~,

wherein deletions ~~of TG~~ at positions 1580 and 1581 in at least one allele of the individual's CD24 gene indicates that the individual has a ~~greater~~ lesser likelihood of experiencing rapid progression of multiple sclerosis than [[an]] another human individual diagnosed with multiple sclerosis and having two alleles of the CD24 gene with TG at ~~those~~ positions 1580 and 1581, and wherein positions 1580 and 1581 are based on the CD24 cDNA sequence depicted in SEQ ID NO: 1.

Claims 8-18 (**Cancelled**)

19. (**New**) The method of claim 7, wherein the sample is a blood sample.

20. (**New**) The method of claim 7, wherein the human individual is homozygous for the deletions at positions 1580 and 1581.

21. (**New**) The method of claim 7, wherein the first human individual is heterozygous for the deletions at positions 1580 and 1581.

22. (New) A method for predicting the likelihood that a first human individual who has been diagnosed with multiple sclerosis will experience rapid progression of multiple sclerosis, comprising:

a) obtaining a sample that includes the 3'-untranslated region of the first human individual's CD24 gene; and

b) analyzing the sample to determine if the first human individual's CD24 gene includes a $CD24^{1580del}$ allele,

wherein the first individual has a lesser likelihood of experiencing rapid progression of multiple sclerosis than a second human individual diagnosed with multiple sclerosis who is homozygous for the $CD24^{1580TG}$ allele if the first individual is homozygous or heterozygous for the $CD24^{1580del}$ allele.

23. (New) The method of claim 22, wherein the step of analyzing the sample is conducted using a technique selected from the group consisting of use of allele-specific probes, use of allele-specific primers, use of direct sequencing, use of restriction enzyme digestion, use of cell surface expression of CD24 protein, and use of denaturing gradient gel electrophoresis.

24. (New) The method of claim 22, wherein the sample is a blood sample.

25. (New) The method of claim 22, wherein the first human individual is homozygous for the $CD24^{1580del}$ allele.

26. (New) The method of claim 22, wherein the first human individual is heterozygous for the $CD24^{1580del}$ allele.